There is also of course Bonfire Night where people will often light bonfires. Remember if you do intend to have a bonfire, it’s a good idea to warn your neighbours - it’s much less likely to result in a complaint.

**Bonfires Guidelines**

- Only burn dry material - freshly cut material causes more smoke.
- Never burn household rubbish, rubber, plastic, foam (including furniture) or paint.
- Avoid lighting in unsuitable weather conditions. These include:
  - Damp, still days
  - Very windy days
  - During the night, or within an hour of sunrise or sunset (wind speeds typically drop during these periods, reducing the dispersion of any smoke)
  - If the wind direction is going to blow it towards neighbours’ property.
- Keep your fire away from trees, fences and buildings.
- Never use oil, petrol or other flammable material to light a fire.
- Don’t set light to a large amount of waste all at once. It is better to have a small fire, make sure it is burning well, and then add small amounts of material at a time. This will minimise the amount of smoke.
- Never leave a fire unattended, or leave it to smoulder overnight - make sure it is completely out.
- Locate the bonfire away from houses to minimise the possibility of smoke affecting neighbours.
- Make sure children are supervised at all times.

If you have a small garden and it’s very close to your neighbour’s house, we would advise you not to have a bonfire at all.

**Barbeques (and other garden burners)**

Lots of people now use their gardens much more by, cooking on barbeques and using heaters (such as Chimneas). Smoke and fumes from these appliances annoy your neighbours. Use the same guidelines as above to minimise the impact of their use. Avoid using them next to areas where your neighbours are sitting out in their garden.

**Who to contact at the council**

If you need any help or more advice then please get in touch with us...

**t: 01902 696000**
**e: envprotection@sstaffs.gov.uk**

Or write to us at:
**Environmental Protection Services**
**South Staffordshire Council**
**Council Offices**
**Wolverhampton Road**
**Codsall**
**South Staffordshire**
**WV8 1PX**

**Why not visit our website at**
**www.sstaffs.gov.uk**
Introduction
Bonfires have traditionally been a way of disposing of waste but they cause pollution and can be a nuisance to people living nearby.

What is wrong with a bonfire?
There are a number of problems caused by burning waste:

- **Air pollution** - Burning waste produces smoke and harmful pollutants.
- **Health effects** - The smoke can have damaging health effects.
- **Annoyance** - We receive hundreds of complaints every year from residents affected by other peoples’ bonfires.
- **Safety** - Bonfires can spread to fences and trees. Exploding cans are also a real danger to those standing nearby.

What alternatives do I have?
1. **Put it in your garden waste bin**
   We collect the garden waste in your green wheeled bin and take it to a local composting facility.

   If you have a large garden, you can get extra green waste bins for a small one-off charge.

   **Call our recycling helpline**
   01902 696203

2. **Take it down to your local Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC)**
   You can find out more about your nearest centre at www.recycleforstaffordshire.org or by calling 0800 232323.

   Your local centres are at:
   - **Bilbrook** - Pendeford Mill Lane (WV8 1JJ)
   - **Wombourne** - Botterham Lane, off Bridgnorth Road (DY3 4RA)
   - **Poplars** - Lichfield Road, Cannock (WS11 8NQ)

3. **Home Composting**
   You can get a home compost bin which will allow you to compost uncooked vegetables and fruit as well as garden refuse, and it provides you with a free source of compost for your garden.

   Plus, residents in South Staffordshire can get compost bins even cheaper. Find out more at www.sstaffs.gov.uk

Bonfires and the law

**What are the rules on having a bonfire?**
There are no specific laws relating to when you can have a bonfire but it is an offence to cause a nuisance from “smoke, fumes or gases”.

In practice the fire would have to be frequent, persistent and substantially interfere with your neighbours before formal action can be taken.

Burning trade or business waste can cause “dark smoke” which is an offence. It is also illegal to dispose of waste that is not from your property, for example, small tradesmen must not burn waste from their business at their home.

Finally, anyone lighting a fire and allowing smoke to drift across a road and endanger traffic faces a fine. The police deal with these cases.

**What to do if you are bothered by smoke?**
Try to approach the person having the bonfire. They often don’t realise the problems they are causing. You may feel awkward about this, but people who have had bonfires often ask us why the complainant didn’t pop round and let them know there was a problem.

You could let them have a copy of this leaflet. It can also be downloaded from our website.

If this fails, contact us to report the problem. We will investigate your complaint and contact the person having the fire to give advice on preventing further problems. Don’t worry though, we won’t tell them who has complained.

**But I like bonfires!**
There will be occasions where there is no alternative but to burn garden waste when it can’t be composted.